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ABSTRACT

Oral interpreters have traditionally been taught to begin their work with an in-depth examination of the text. Thus, classes in oral interpretation have emphasized the importance of literary analysis. Before a student can attempt a performance, the text must be analyzed in detail, as fully as possible, in an attempt to understand the nuances inherent in the literature. In a similar way, the elocutionists in the eighteenth century taught the value of knowing the internal and external traits of a passion before a speaker attempted to deliver a speech. Unfortunately, early twentieth century practitioners of elocution were more interested in the mechanics of speaking than in natural speech performance. They left elocution with the connotation that it still carries today, that of teaching stilted and unnatural delivery. In much the same manner, some claim that surface "style" has overtaken "substance" in the typical contest performance. Not surprisingly, coaches of oral interpretation competitors are often accused of teaching unnatural performance skills. This paper situates and examines the "style versus substance" debate by considering such topics as: (1) the rise and fall of the Elocutionary Movement; (2) notions of style and substance; (3) stock narrators; (4) the advantages and disadvantages of stylized conventions; and (5) the pedagogical strengths and weaknesses of implicitly/explicitly establishing style guidelines. Contains 24 references. (Author/RS)

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Running head: PERFORMANCE STYLE

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Performance Style vs. Textual Substance: Elocutionism Reincarnated in the Contemporary Practice of Oral Interpretation

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Abstract

Oral interpreters have traditionally been taught to begin their work with an in-depth examination of the text. Thus, classes in oral interpretation have emphasized the importance of literary analysis. Before a student can attempt a performance, the text must be analyzed in detail in an attempt to understand the nuances inherent in the literature as fully as possible. In a similar way, the elocutionists in the eighteenth century taught the value of knowing the internal and external traits of a passion before a speaker attempted to deliver a speech. Unfortunately, early twentieth century practitioners of elocution were more interested in the mechanics of speaking than in natural speech performance. They left elocution with the connotation that it still carries today, that of teaching stilted and unnatural delivery. In much the same manner, some claim that surface "style" has overtaken "substance" in the typical contest performance. Not surprisingly, coaches of oral interpretation competitors are often accused of teaching unnatural performance skills. This paper will situate and examine the "style versus substance" debate by considering such topics as: (1) the rise and fall of the Elocutionary Movement, (2) notions of style and substance, (3) stock narrators (4) the advantages and disadvantages of stylized conventions, and (5) the pedagogical strengths and weaknesses of implicitly/explicitly establishing style guidelines.

Performance Style vs. Textual Substance: Elocutionism Reincarnated in the Contemporary Practice of Oral Interpretation

> Interpretation is the art of communicating to an audience a work of literary art in its intellectual, emotional, and aesthetic entirety.
>
> Charlotte I. Lee & Frank Galati, Oral Interpretation.

> Reading a work, then, is not a gaining of conceptual knowledge through observation or reflection; it is an "experience," a breaking down and breaking open of one's old way of seeing. It is not the interpreter who manipulates the work, for the work remains fixed; rather; the work has impressed itself on him and he is so changed he can never regain the innocence lost through experience.
>
> Richard E. Palmer, Hermeneutics

Introduction

In their turn-of-the-century textbook, Practical Elements of Elocution, Fulton and Trueblood (1903) define elocution as "**the science and art of expression by voice and action**" (p. 1, original emphasis). As an art, elocution deals with the correct outward expression of thought and feeling. As a science, it discovers and classifies the principles that govern such expression. The purpose of elocution, according to Fulton and Trueblood, is to correct bad habits of speech and gesture, and to make the body a fit instrument to serve the mind and soul.

Developed in England, the practice of elocution was concerned with close textual analysis, isolating key-word relationships within sentences in order to deliver highly precise textual renderings. A second emphasis of the Elocutionary Movement was on developing practiced, physical instruments in order to create aesthetically appealing performances of literature. Although early teachers of elocution stressed naturalistic delivery, their performances, at least by today's standards, would appear stilted and unnatural.

From the eighteenth to the late nineteenth century the teaching of elocution flourished. However, as the practice of elocution was brought to America by disciples of such early elocutionists as Thomas

Sheridan and John Walker, the teaching of elocution became more and more mechanical and rule-bound (Wiksell, 1948). Ironically, the art of elocution, which was meant to correct bad habits of speech and gesture, began teaching them. Passed from teacher to student, and then student to pupil, excesses began to crop up in elocutionary practice. These excesses (arising out of a misunderstanding of elocutionary exercises and a watering down of elocutionary intentions) resulted in the teaching of a grandiloquent style in which mechanical displays of extravagant verbal and physical passion were preferred over more modulated performances. Eventually, the mechanical practice of the elocutionist's art fell into disfavor in the early twentieth century and was replaced by such practices as expressionism, oral interpretation, and more recently, performance.

But is the elocutionist impulse gone for good, or is it merely in hiding? Is the elocutionist itch hibernating within competitive forensics? Has the performance of oral interpretation on the forensics circuit mutated into a rule-bound endeavor in which mechanical practice has become routine and even preferred? Is our current concern with performance style over interpretive substance merely the hallmark of a "New Elocutionism?"

A Timely Comparison

Reacting against "mere speech," Fulton and Trueblood (1903) draw on Ruskin's discussion of what he believed were serious problems with recitation in the nineteenth century. Comparing the fatal flaws in art with the fatal flaws in public performance, Ruskin wrote that:

> all **fatal faults in art** that might have been otherwise good, arise from one or other of these three things: either from the pretense to feel what we do not; the indolence in exercises necessary to obtain the power of expressing truth; or the presumptuous insistence upon, and indulgence in our own powers and delights and with no care or wish that they be useful to others, so only they be admired by them" (pp. 1-2, original emphasis).

Interpretative performances in Individual Events (I.E.) competition might well be accused of the same flaws. In fact, some instructors of oral interpretation and theater view the practice of interpretation, as it is performed on the forensic circuit, a suspect endeavor. These teachers complain that the contemporary practice of competitive forensics is just as likely to teach students bad performance habits as good interpretative practices. Indeed, the faults articulated by Ruskin concerning the performance of recitation

might just as well be applied to performance in contemporary Individual Events. Using Ruskin's framework we maintain that some students competing in contemporary Individual Events (1) enact a performance style that distances them from the emotive force of their literature, (2) bypass textual analysis in favor of performance tricks in their (or their team's) desire for "product," and (3) substitute "sound for sense, emotion for truth" and "display 'tone and gesture' for their own sake rather than for the truth they should make forcible" (Fulton & Trueblood, 1903, p. 2).

In suggesting that current interpretive practices in Individual Events correspond to a "New Elocutionism," we desire to stimulate a debate in the merits of "style over substance," in the reliance by some interpreters on a generic performance style over close textual analysis. To accomplish this goal we situate and examine the "style versus substance" issue by considering such topics as: (1) the rise and fall of the Elocutionary Movement, (2) notions of style and substance, (3) stock narrators (4) the advantages and disadvantages of stylized conventions, and (5) the pedagogical strengths and weaknesses of implicitly/explicitly establishing style guidelines.

The Elocutionist Movement Considered

According to Lee (1959) the word *elocutio* or elocution (Latin, eloqui, elocutus = speak out) originally signified in English the art of effective literary expression as it referred primarily to written style. However, between 1650 and 1750, a shift in connotation took place and the term elocution began to be applied to the manner of oral delivery rather than the written style of composition.

Elocution was standard practice in recitation in the mid-nineteenth century. It involved the learning of voice production and/or gesture (depending upon the system utilized). Although there were different schools of elocutionist thought, the basic approach is summed up by John Hambury Dwyer, a professor of elocution. In an essay written in 1843, Dwyer suggests that, "Elocution...is the power of fluent speech, the flow of language, of expression and diction, the art of speaking with accuracy, elegance, and perpicuity" (p. 7). Students of the elocutionists were taught to breathe, laugh, sigh, articulate and modulate through the study of concise rules. According to Gentile (1981), elocutionists' opinions on physical gestures were far less uniform. Many manuals excluded any mention of gestures while others suggested that the reader should exercise constraint. In those texts that did advocate the use of gesture, the correct manner

of movement was highly prescribed and mechanical. The prevailing attitude was "that gesture, if it were to be used by a reader at all, should reflect the qualities of good speech: decorum, grace, and elegance" (p. 8).

The two most prominent figures in the American Elocutionary Movement were Dr. James Rush and Francois Delsarte. The most prominent of the two in America was Rush. Robb (1941) describes his influence:

> Dr. James Rush, in his Philosophy of the Human Voice, published in 1827, introduced science into the teaching of elocution. Although his book was not a textbook, it succeeded in analyzing the functions of voice in such a minute manner that it became the basis of books written during this period. At first, physiology was the branch of science most emphasized and the training in elocution became not only a means of developing a useful and necessary skill but in some cases was prescribed as a therapy for bodily ailments (pp. 73-74).

Francois Delsarte, a French music and acting teacher, whose students brought his system to America, also influenced oral interpretation in America. Delsarte believed that gesture was the highest form of expression because it expressed the soul. He devised a series of exercises that his followers claimed produced poise, grace, beauty of face and figure, and health. Among these was an exercise called "statue-posing," which called for the performer to imitate several poses represented by Greek statues. It was believed that in this way all the basic emotions could be expressed.

In sum, American teachers of elocution taught a rigid and prescriptive method for public performance. Followers of both Rush and Delsarte focused upon mechanical models of speech and gesture. Eventually, their followers focus on mechanical systems moved them more and more away from a naturalistic performance style.

Characterization

Although guided by practices of articulation, modulation, and inflection, elocutionists omitted the issue of characterization. Interpreters were trained to limit their use of characterization, instead letting the "words" tell the story. Fulton and Trueblood reference the ideas of S.H. Clark, a prominent elocutionist, in explicating the forces against characterization. Clark wrote that "**We should not personate, even though we have the quoted words of a character, unless such personation is absolutely necessary to the thought or dramatic effect of the interpretation**" (p. 341, original emphasis). Initially, at least, one of

the goals of elocution was to focus on the words of the author. Anything that placed the speaker's technique in the foreground was to be avoided.

According to Gentile (1981), if a nineteenth century elocutionist were approached on the subject of characterization, he would have probably defended his position by stating that character delineation was not the concern of the elocutionist but that of an actor" (p. 9). This issue finds a corollary in contemporary oral interpretation in the still referenced difference between acting and interpretation. Fulton and Trueblood (1903) suggest that it is important to distinguish between the reciter and the actor:

> As a personator or reciter...we may suggest the action without carrying it to the extent appropriate to the actor. We must suggest the picture, and allow the imagination of the audience to paint it. We may personate a number of character...but we should not *act* them. The drawing of a dagger may be indicated, but there is no necessity of sheathing it....the actor [however] actually paints the pictures...The personator draws his locations, scene, characters, and accessories from the realm of the imagination, uses them for the moment to suggest the picture, and then they vanish without a literal accounting for, leaving their idealistic impressions upon the minds of the audience (pp. 340-341).

The study of elocution began to lose favor in the early twentieth century, eventually losing out to methods more concerned with emphasizing naturalism. S.S. Curry, the famous expressionist, was harsh in his critique of the Elocutionary Movement. He variously described elocution as "a synonym for all that is empty and superficial in art," taught by those who believe in a "one-sided merely mechanical method," in methods so crude and primitive as to represent the art of delivery "in its Egyptian period" (Gray, 1973, p. 322). When a focus on text became paramount, interpretive practices became intimately concerned with characterization.

One of the important differences between elocution and contemporary schools of oral interpretation is that "from the beginning, the best of the elocutionists has viewed oral interpretation as a test of the reader's understanding of the text, but not as a *cause* of its realization" (Gray, 1973, p. 322). This is an important distinction. The proof, so to speak, was "in the pudding", but not in the process. Many of the above themes have been carried to the present day venue of competitive forensics. These themes are,

for example, that there is too much concern for product, that current coaches are removed form formal training in oral interpretation, and we have become mechanistic in our approach to coaching interpretation.

Style versus Substance

George Bernard Shaw once wrote, "He who has nothing to assert has no style." According to Lee and Galati (1977), "style is the character or personality of a literary work. Style is also a mode of performance. The goal of the performer is to match the style of performance with the style of the work" (p. 148). Unfortunately, style has a negative connotation when it is contrasted with the idea of substance. Substance for us refers to recognizable performance choices. The ability to understand and realize a fully developed character. Interpreters would be well to remember that:

> Techniques are not tricks. A trick deceives in order to puzzle or amuse. Technique, on the other hand, is skill is execution…There is always a strong temptation to adopt certain physical and vocal mannerisms for their own sake, rather than allowing them to grow out of the needs of the material. Characters are what they are because of numerous underlying mental and emotional qualities. They speak and move as they do because of those qualities. Only when the basics of characterization are clearly understood can the interpreter begin to work on the techniques that will honestly communicate the desired effects. Every interpreter…must occasionally ask, "Why am I doing this character in this particular way? Is it because of the demand of the material or because I am being tempted to charm or impress my audience?" The need to ask the question is no reflection on the interpreter's integrity. Self-discipline and a firm set of artistic values will keep the interpreter from exhibitionism (Lee & Galati, 1977, pp. 362-363).

Internal versus External Performance Choices

When considering the creation of a persona or role, it is imperative to examine the relative importance of internal understanding and external performance choices. The unfortunate importance of external performance choices might best been seen in current scholarship which examines unwritten rules of oral interpretation competition (Cronn-Mills & Golden, 1997; Kirch & Zeidler, 1997). For example, Cronn-Mills and Golden (1997) discuss ten unwritten rules of oral interpretation. Each of these deals with performance choices unrelated to the process of character analysis. Of particular interest is the authors'

discussion of the "twelve-step program" through which unwritten rules get generated within the forensic community (p. 2).

We suggest that students get back to the very important task of analyzing texts (see McHughes, 1981, for an example of the process of close textual analysis). Only through close textual analysis can informed interpretive choices be made.

Stock Narrators

One of the most interesting exemplars related to the style versus substance debate can be found in the issue of stock narrators. This stock narrator has become the reviled exemplar in debates concerning both blurred genre distinctions and problematic performance styles. We echo Lacroix and Hart's (1995) indictment of stock narrators in competitive forensics. They argue that:

> students have come to rely on a limited repertoire of performance "techniques" that resembles a "prescription" for performance. In our estimation, these techniques influence the development (or lack thereof) of the character of the narrator, so that the potentialities of the literature, so important to *interpretation*, are severely limited. By referring to the similarity in choices for performance of the narrator as the creation of a "stock" narrator, we are suggesting that students are replicating a particular performance persona regardless of the literature they choose to perform" (Lacroix & Hart, 1995, p. 2).

The issue of stock narrators is not a new one. It is explicit in many papers that deal with the similarity of pieces performed in "distinctive" genres (see Kirch & Morgan ,1990; Kirch & Zeidler, 1997; Zeidler & Lindemann, 1995).

In his book, Communicating Literature, An Introduction to Oral Interpretation, Todd Lewis (1981) suggest that "oral interpretation of literature becomes the art of presenting literature so that textual analysis, communicative intent, and performance skills synergize to arouse a meaningful audience response" (pp. 1-2). Lewis believes that each of these tasks is equally important. Sadly, and to the detriment of textual analysis and communicative intent, the development of performance skills has seemed to become the primary objective in forensics training. Extensive literary analysis is shorted in order to discuss technique. Considerations of "what to do" and "how to do it" have started to come before answers to the question, "what does it mean?" In many ways the change is not surprising. Interpreters skilled in "performance

techniques" can produce performances of surprising visual and auditory power, even if their readings are misguided or do not say very much. In fact, it is our observation that pieces are now often picked for their "technical merit" as much as for their artistic worth. The result has been the creation of a breed of interpreters who would be just as good at "reading the telephone book" as at performing more traditional literature. This skill may sound worthwhile. After all, who would not want to achieve performance mastery over something as boring as a telephone book? Unfortunately, our jaded perception is that the "skilled" interpreter would use the same stock narrative voice to perform both the traditional piece and the phone book. This issue is not lost on Lacroix and Hart (1995):

> By giving attention to performance skills, forensics students are ignoring the elements of performance *acts*. In doing so, the narrators created in forensics competitions are more reflective of a student's general performance skill, rather than a student's interpretation of the literature. Thus, narrators are not developed in order to insightfully communicate literature, they are designed to demonstrate to judges that a student has mastered a particular forensic skill. Therefore, as coaches and judges, we are teaching and rewarding students that have perfected mediocrity (Lacroix & Hart, 1995, p. 4).

The creation of a stock narrator needs to be discouraged. The art of interpretation is one in which close textual understanding should be privileged.

Stylized Conventions

There are numerous examples of conventions that exist within forensics competition. These conventions are primarily nonverbal in nature. We will quickly examine some of these customs and then discuss their advantages and disadvantages.

Paralanguage refers to the *way* in which something is said rather than *what* is said. It concerns such vocal qualities as rate of speech, volume, and rhythm; vocal characterizers such as laughing and crying; vocal segregates such as "uh" and "ah"; and pitch (Devito, 1989). Unfortunately, performers seem to share several stylistic tendencies. First, pauses are often used as a substitute for emotional expressiveness, with performers lingering in silence to communicate that something very important is being felt. Second, performers use sudden dramatic bursts of speed and volume to indicate emotional intensity rather than using more pronounced and logical builds. Third, performers like using the emotional fade.

This requires going from laughing, through a neutral expression, and ending up at an emotion or expression at the other end of the human spectrum, such as sadness. Lacroix and Hart (1995) note that, "perhaps we have decided that such a basic interpretation issue (emotional build) is beneath our consideration, but it strikes us as odd that manipulations of volume are privileged over internalization and build" (p. 8).

In addition to the stylized use of paralanguage, several physical conventions are also in vogue. Cronn-Mills and Golden (1997) discuss several of these as "unwritten rules" of oral interpretation. Unwritten rules include snapping pages to indicate time transitions, "praying to the interp gods" before beginning a selection, using the interp book as a prop, and prescriptions for movement in different events (i.e., use minimal action in everything but duo which must include blocking and movement). Particularly irksome are binder tricks. As Cronn-Millls and Golden (1997) note, "a drawback to using the little black book [as a prop] is how the audience is enticed into noticing the little black book itself and is, therefore, pulled back into the here-and-now" (p.5).

We could go on to list many other conventions accepted (or at least tolerated) and taught within our community. Teaching conventions does have advantages: (1) knowledge of conventions demonstrates in-group status, (2) performances are more likely to adhere to both implicit and explicit judging criteria, (3) performers can "throw" events together if it becomes a competitive necessity, and (4) surface performance skills can be transferred to other contexts.

First, coaches and students understand that conventions demonstrate in-group status. Knowledge of forensics techniques serves to legitimize judges and competitors alike (Kirch & Zeidler, 1997). It should not be surprising, then, that judges will look for competitors to utilize these conventions when they are adjudicating rounds of competition. Second, shared standards of performance wind up as judging criteria. It is a fact of competition that people are influenced by what wins. Conventions express similarity in performance. Unsure judges rest easier when their decision (of contestant rank) is based upon standards for performance they believe are shared by the community. Third, being well-versed in the techniques of performance means that a student can make something "sound and look good" with very little practice. This can be an important skill in the mad dash for qualifications. Finally, a student's ability to make a piece look and sound good can be applied to other contexts. While superficial and slick may not correlate with

depth of analysis, smooth presentation skills can be helpful in contexts such as public speaking and interviewing.

Unfortunately, as we have argued elsewhere (see Kirch & Zeidler, 1997), these conventions result in four harms, (1) they limit the choices students make, (2) they do not demonstrate sound practices of oral interpretation, (3) they can generate a performance style not conducive to other performance contexts and (4) they result in emotionally distanced interpretive practices.

First, standards limit the choices students make because they are forced to adapt their performance choices to unwritten assessment templates. For example, if "snaps" are a valued presentational feature of competitive interpretation then they "need" to be added to make the performance more interesting and worthy. If dramatic bursts of speech and physical flourishes separate winning competitors from losing competitors, then these will be added to make the interpretation more "interesting". Second, our competition conventions do not keep pace with current academic practice. This concern is often encapsulated in the question, "Why are we still using binders?" Obviously, the conventions discussed above serve to separate the forensics performer from those engaged in the academic study of interpretation and textual analysis. Third community standards force students to adapt to a specific style of performance, usually not conducive to other contexts. As previously discussed, outside critics often complain that forensic performances are stilted and artificial, and that training in forensics is an education in bad habits. Finally, these practices result in emotionally distanced performances. Narrators no longer seem to be situated in the world they are telling us about, but are instead, disengaged from it, telling their stories from a distance using heavy handed technique to create a good looking presentation without emotional ballast. As an example of this distancing, Tew, Bonnette, and Fong (1995) discuss the strong lure of creating action in the present while interpreting a scene placed firmly in the past.

Style Guidelines

We have argued that contemporary practices in Individual Events represent a "New Elocutionism". Much like the old Elocutionary Movement, this one is also bound for failure. It risks losing sight of the skills our activity is supposed to be teaching. This "New Elocutionism" is a troublesome hybrid. It combines a decreased focus on finding deep meaning in text with increased attention to stylistic conventions and has created a situation in which generic performance style has become the rule and not the exception. It

suggests a worldview in which the best interpretation is precise, physically interesting, and populated with devices that speak more to style than to motivation. As we have argued elsewhere, many of the unwritten rules at the base of these practices have little to do with good interpretation (Kirch & Zeidler, 1997).

Then why does the practice of rewarding problematic interpretation continue? Why do we continue to be constrained by conventions that are anti-educational? Why do we tolerate conventions that suggest, for example, that a prose narrator must be like the performer in class and gender; where interpretive believability is primarily an issue of casting? Three reasons come to mind: (1) a monistic judging pool, (2) the value of demonstrable skill, and (3) our own subjectivity.

The first reason may be that, as Pelias (1985) suggests, our conventions create a monistic judging pool full of individuals responsible only to one view of performance, which too often in our activity, is the view articulated in the non-theoretical unwritten rules of forensics. We have lost touch with the wide range of expression and with our historical roots. Part of the problem may be that relatively few of our coaches have ever had formal training in performance. They have picked up what they know from competing, coaching, and from watching others. Much like the second and third generation teachers of elocution, this has resulted in a focus on external "tricks" rather than internal coherence. The result, stated simply, is that judges reward what they know, but that what they know may be limited.

A second reason is that a clean, error free, performance suggests a high degree of practice. We need to remember, however, that surface precision does not always correlate with interpretive depth. It is often more likely to suggest the use of a stock narrator that presents no stretch for the performer. Here a distinction must be made. There is a distinct difference between performers playing characters who are genuinely similar to themselves and doing it well, and performers who impose stock narrators onto their selections. In the latter instance, the choice of a narrative body works against the meaning of the piece.

Finally, judging is subjective. It is not an easy task and we need to be careful to take people to task when we ourselves may be the ones not understanding the interpretation. Sometimes we can become so conditioned to good "performers" interpreting dialogue that we dismiss less technically interesting performances that are more true to the original literature. Judging consistency is difficult to achieve due to the subjectivity each critic brings to the task of adjudicating a round. Mills (1983) reminds us that evaluating oral interpretation performance is difficult at best for "It is a unique characteristic of man that he

views things from his own set of perceptions. These perceptions are formulated by the individual's background, education, and experiences" (pp. 19-20).

This leave us in a precarious position. We can either foreground textual analysis and communicative intent in our adjudication of rounds and teaching of skills, or we can stay with the present system in which style is often rewarded over substance. Both of these positions are troublesome.

We are reminded of an event which enjoyed a brief fascination in the Midwest. The event was called Argumentative Interpretation. Essentially, competitors presented a four minute selection of literature, a four minute analysis of the literature, and then participated in a two-minute minute question and answer period during which the judge was allowed to question any of the students' analysis or specific performance choices. We remember believing that this event was worthwhile if only to remind us of the importance of analysis and the necessity to articulate clear reasons for performance choices.

In a presentation on event standardization, Paine (1996) concluded that we can enjoy the benefits of nonstandardization without sacrificing student learning, but that we can only enjoy these benefits through "deliberate choice" (p. 42). We agree with his pronouncement. Although flashy performance styles will not easily go away (and should not go away) we need to pay closer attention to the meaning behind the flash. We need to reward, or at least not condemn, risky (i.e., not traditionally competitive) literature choices. We need to be ready to weather the storms of criticism that will inevitably arise when we choose substance over style. Weathering this tempest may be our most difficult task as our judging decisions are tied to perceptions of our competence. Of course, we should not adhere to this call haphazardly or without the ballot-writing skill necessary to articulate our concerns. Finally, and most importantly, we need to train our students in good habits of interpretation. Too often we get so busy improving our students' writing skills that we neglect to question their foundation in literary analysis. A renewed focus on teaching the *process* of interpretation is badly needed.

Conclusion

In the early twentieth century the death knoll for the teaching of elocution was sounded. As teaching became less focused on the original ideas and intent of elocution, it developed into a highly mechanical and artificial art form. It is imperative that oral interpretation in Individual Events does not continue as a form of "New Elocutionism". We need to get back to issues in interpretation that really

matter, such as analytic depth and textual knowledge, and pull our focus from the stylistic concerns that seemingly rule the day. Only then can we resist being called obsolete or out of touch with the skills we claim to teach.

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